

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY PM/ISP:MMICHAUD:JMM

APPROVED BY PM/ISP:DGOMPERT

EUR/CE - G. HUMPHREY

EUR/RPM - P. COLLINS

NEA/IAI - M.G. ANDERSON

EUR/SOV - D. HERSPRING

OSD/ISA - D. STEVENS

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

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USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

INFO DOD

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 106613

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: MILI, GW, UR

SUBJECT: OPPOSING FORCES TRAINING PROGRAM (OPFOR)

1. THE U. S. ARMY HAS BEEN CONDUCTING AN ARMY-WIDE OPPOSING FORCES (OPFOR) TRAINING PROGRAM TO FAMILIARIZE U.S. ARMY UNITS WITH SOVIET ARMY EQUIPMENT, TACTICS, AND DOCTRINE. THIS PROGRAM MAKES USE OF CAPTURED SOVIET EQUIPMENT REFURBISHED BY A U.S. ARMY UNIT AT ABERDEEN PROVING GROUNDS.

2. A PILOT TRAINING PROGRAM WAS CONDUCTED AT FORT HOOD FROM JULY TO DECEMBER 1976. IT WAS THEN EXPANDED TO
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INCLUDE 11 DIVISIONS, 3 SEPARATE BRIGADES, AND SERVICE SCHOOLS, ALL IN THE U.S. EACH OF THESE COMMANDS IS TO RECEIVE THE EQUIPMENT NORMALLY USED BY A SOVIET RIFLE COMPANY, A TANK, AND AN APC.

3. PRIOR TO INITIATING THIS TRAINING PROGRAM, THE U.S. ARMY CONSULTED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE ON THE PUBLIC

AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS ASPECTS, AND RECEIVED GUIDANCE WHICH, AMONG OTHER THINGS, LIMITED THE PROGRAM TO SOVIET TACTICS, DOCTRINE, AND EQUIPMENT. OTHER WARSAW PACT NATIONS (AS WELL AS CHINA, NORTH KOREA, AND NORTH VIETNAM) WERE EXPLICITLY EXCLUDED FROM THE PROGRAM. LOW KEY PRESS RELEASES BY THE ARMY, INTENDED IN PART TO MAKE THE PROGRAM

KNOWN TO THE SOVIETS, HAVE RECEIVED MODEST COVERAGE IN THE PRESS AND ON TV. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THERE HAS BEEN NO REACTION FROM THE SOVIETS.

4. THE ARMY NOW WISHES TO EXPAND THE OPFOR TRAINING PROGRAM TO US UNITS STATIONED IN THE FRG. THERE WOULD FIRST BE A PILOT PROGRAM CONDUCTED BY THE 8TH INFANTRY DIVISION, EXTENDING FROM MAY UNTIL OCTOBER 1977. AFTER EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM, OPFOR TRAINING WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED IN OTHER U.S. ARMY UNITS IN THE FRG BEGINNING DECEMBER 1977 OR JANUARY 1978.

5. THE ARMY STATES THAT THERE IS SUFFICIENT CAPTURED SOVIET EQUIPMENT ALREADY IN STORAGE IN THE FRG TO CONDUCT THE PILOT PROGRAM IN THE 8TH INFANTRY DIVISION. EXPANSION OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM TO OTHER U.S. UNITS IN THE FRG WOULD REQUIRE SHIPPING IN ADDITIONAL CAPTURED SOVIET EQUIPMENT. THE ARMY STATES THAT EQUIPMENT WOULD BE SHIPPED UNDER COVERS.

6. A TRAINING DEMONSTRATION USING CAPTURED SOVIET EQUIPMENT WAS HELD IN THE FRG IN NOVEMBER 1976. COMMANDERS
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FROM SEVERAL UNITS OF NATO MEMBER STATES, INCLUDING U.S., FRG, AND FRENCH OFFICERS, ATTENDED THE DEMONSTRATION. WE ARE INFORMED THAT THIS DEMONSTRATION WAS CLEARED WITH EMBASSY BONN AND THE MOD IN BONN.

7. THE DEPARTMENT BELIEVES THAT THE OPFOR PROGRAM IN THE U.S. CONTRIBUTES TO THE READINESS OF U.S. FORCES, AND THAT IT HAS CAUSED NO PROBLEMS IN OUR RELATIONS WITH THE USSR. (THE SOVIETS CONDUCT A SIMILAR PROGRAM IN THE USSR WITH CAPTURED U.S. EQUIPMENT). HOWEVER, WE WISH TO PROCEED CAREFULLY BEFORE INITIATING AN OPFOR PROGRAM IN THE FRG. WE TAKE THE POSITION THAT THE ARMY SHOULD NOT INITIATE PRESS RELEASES ABOUT THE OPFOR PROGRAM IN EUROPE, AND SHOULD NOT PUBLICIZE IT BEYOND WHAT IS NEEDED LOCALLY ON AN IF-ASKED BASIS TO ANSWER INQUIRIES ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF SOVIET EQUIPMENT. WE ALSO TAKE THE POSITION THAT ALL EASILY VISIBLE SOVIET MARKINGS SHOULD BE REMOVED.

8. AS A FIRST STEP, WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE VIEWS OF

ADDRESSEE POSTS ON THE US ARMY'S PROPOSAL, AND ON HOW CONSULTATIONS WITH FRG AND NATO AUTHORITIES SHOULD BE CONDUCTED.

CHRISTOPHER

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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